

Relations with Others – 2

Intro: We now turn to the personal characteristics which must be developed in order to foster unity and peace among the people of God.

1. Characteristics That Foster Unity

Genetics, family nurturing and socialization all play roles in our general demeanor and temperament. God, however, expects us to regulate and alter these when they conflict with His will. What characteristics foster unity?

A. Genuine love for others.

1. Sincere love that is not for show or hypocritical – 1 Pet 1:22.
2. Fervent love that covers a multitude of sins – 1 Pet 4:8.
3. Sacrificial love that is willing to suffer loss for another – Jn 15:13.
4. Active love that goes beyond verbal intent – 1 Jn 3:16-18.
5. Impartial love not based on selfish gain – Jas 2:8-9.
6. Love based upon pattern of God's love for us – 1 Jn 4:10-11.
7. Love that is constantly increasing – 1 Th 4:9-10.

B. Humility. This is not self-depreciation or refusal to acknowledge one's abilities or assets but the lack of need to promote or advance oneself. It is the willingness to give way to others when not in violation of God's law or valid judgment.

1. Esteem others better than self – Ph 2:1-4.
2. Seek the other's well-being – 1 Cor 10:24.
3. Submit to each other when possible – 1 Pet 5:5.

C. Disposition to forgive. In spite of our love, humility and genuine concern for each others, mistakes will be made. How do we respond when wronged?

1. Kind, tenderhearted, remembering that we are forgiven – Eph 4:32.
2. Various qualities plus longsuffering – Col 3:12-14.

3. Forgive as needed, not a quota system – Mt 18:21-22. We receive much greater forgiveness than we are asked to give.
 4. In sample prayer, Jesus comments on *only one element*: forgiveness – Mt 6:9-15.
- D. Hospitality – The willingness to open our homes, share our goods, spend time with each other. The better we know people, the more we will understand their motivations, circumstances. The less we know about someone, the more inclined we are to attribute impure motives to them, criticize their actions or impose our own will.
1. The first disciples set the example – Ac 2:46.
 2. Given to hospitality – Rom 12:13.
 3. The quality of an elder – 1 Tim 3:2.
- E. Summary: Contrast wisdom from below with wisdom from above – Jas 3:13-18.

2. Consequences of Disunity

- A. Influence ruined – Our hypocrisy results in the name of God being blasphemed among unbelievers – Rom 2:24.
- B. Unscrupulous personalities dominate the church – 3 Jn 9-11 (Diotrophes). Many churches allow such men to rule because there is no unified consensus to oppose.
- C. Partiality, favoritism will disassociate us from good brethren – 1 Cor 3:5-10, 21-23.
- D. Carnal appetites are fed rather than starved – 1 Cor 3:3-4.
- E. Churches will eventually consume each other – Gal 5:13-15. All energy is directed inward, discouragement overrides enthusiasm for reaching the lost, worship becomes a dreaded meeting of the contentious rather than an uplifting communion with the Lord (note the corruption of the Lord's supper in 1 Cor 11:18).

3. When All Else Fails ...

- A. Corrective measures must be taken when sin has occurred and goes unaddressed.
- B. Thoughts on procedures:
 1. When behavior is personal, private transgression against another – Mt 18:15.
 2. When one has knowledge of private sin, the spirit of Mt 18 must be considered. On the other hand, perhaps it would be appropriate given the circumstances to contact parents, a close friend or elders.

3. The spiritual should seek to restore the one overtaken in a trespass – Gal 6:1-2.
 4. Public transgression needs public rebuke – Gal 2:11-14; 1 Tim 5:19-21. This may involve the whole of the church speaking out against the transgressor. Some are to be “marked” as contentious and avoided (Rom 16:17). A spirit of godly *décorum* must prevail in correcting those who are in opposition (2 Tim 2:24-26).
 5. There is a time to treat a brother “*like a heathen and a tax collector*” (Mt 18:17). This is for the stubbornly impenitent man. He must be “*delivered to Satan*”; faithful brethren are not to keep company with “*anyone named a brother*” who continues in sin (1 Cor 5:5, 9-11). “*Therefore put away from yourselves that wicked person*” (1 Cor 5:13).
- C. These are hurtful, difficult and sad occasions, but the purity of God’s people and the peace and harmony of the body must be maintained. God has displayed the need for sanctification throughout history, and He wants His church to be cleaned from all that would contaminate it.